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Finance Committee Minutes 01-04-04

ARLINGTON FINANCE COMMITTEE
 MINUTES OF MEETING
 7:30 PM O'NEILL ROOM, COMMUNITY SAFETY BUILDING
 1/12/04

ATTENDEES:

DeCoursey*	Feinleib	O'Riordan*	O'Neill*	Mahoney*
Tosti*	Connors*	Simmons*	Morrisette*	
Piandes*	Foskett	Deyst*	Ronan*	
DuBois*	Franclemont*	Jones*	Olsen*	
	Howard*	Fanning*		Kneeland*

* Indicates present

VISITORS: Annie LaCourt, Paul Bayer

MINUTES of 12/1/03 accepted as corrected. Unanimous.

BUDGETS: Budget books passed out. All departments included except schools. The Chair asked members to study & understand their subcommittee's budgets, interview department heads as required, & correct any mistakes. He plans to get votes on all budgets soon, compute the deficit, and then ask the appointing authorities to reduce their requests according to the O'Neill formula.

BUDGET & REVENUE TASK FORCE: The Chair described the Manager's proposal to take \$1m to \$2m from the building insurance trust fund based on a home rule petition leaving enough to cover the deductible. The money would be transferred to the Stabilization Fund. Although not available to appropriate until FY05, the current Stabilization Fund could be expended in FY04 knowing that it would be replenished.

SCHOOLS: Education SubCom (Jones) reported that during the recent budget workshop the Superintendent proposed a sports participant fee to cover half the cost of the program. Her education budget of \$31,200,220 includes an additional 20 FTE teachers but no collective bargaining costs. These costs will be in a warrant article. She is preparing a revised tax impact estimate for Dallin that will include the current interest rate which is much lower than when the override was passed. An Infrastructure Committee mtg is scheduled for 1/15. Copies of the 10/1 enrollment summary to be provided to FinCom members.

STATE AID: The governor's budget, H1, is expected on 1/28. Besides local aid, it will propose school building reimbursement funding.

WARRANT: The Chair plans to insert the standard articles: free cash, overlay reserve, tip fee, lots & graves, retiree health insurance. He also plans articles to allow acceptance of local option taxes (if any), increases in fees, and contributions to the stabilization fund. Olsen suggested that a bylaw be proposed that requires an annual review of all fees to insure they cover costs. Perhaps a master list supervised by the Town Manager is needed.

FINCOM VACANCIES: The Chair has a good candidate in Pct 1, but none in Pct 20. He plans to end the search on 1/15.

MUNICIPAL BENCHMARKING: Jones described a mtg held w/ Tom Cronin of Municipal Benchmarking and Tosti, Foskett, & Howard. Cronin's company is developing an inclusive data base from public sources and a procedure to select peer communities in an impartial way. Cronin showed a preliminary copy of a report for Arlington containing 100 pages of tables

and charts. The cost of the first copy is about \$1000. Additional copies and Excel spreadsheets will cost extra.

VOTED to purchase a copy. 14-3. The purchase will require a transfer from the Reserve Fund.

USER FEES: Olsen provided revised enclosures for the report he presented at the last meeting. It shows the cost of maintaining the fields to be about \$500k. He requested a vote on whether the FinCom was supportive of continuing to develop a field user fee. In the ensuing discussion pro arguments included equity w/ users of the rink who cover the entire rink costs, the exclusive use afforded teams using the fields, and the significant cost of rehabbing and maintaining the fields for use by organized sports. Anti arguments included the inequity of charging organized users but not charging informal users, if charged users will expect better maintenance, the differences between the rink & the fields that make comparison invalid, increased fees threaten overrides.

VOTED to pursue charging sports groups for field use. 9-7.

SYMMEs: DeCoursey reported that the 4 developers are presenting their plans today and tomorrow. A public mtg is scheduled for 1/26. The Advisory Committee will also meet soon. A decision by the ARB is scheduled for 2/9. The rival plans may be viewed on the web, or at the library.

COMMITTEE: Next mtg Monday 1/26/04. Subsequent meeting 1/28.
For more info go to <http://www.arlingtonfincom.com/>

RESERVE FUND BALANCE \$400,000

cc Selectmen	Peter B Howard	
FinCom Members	Library file	Secretary 1/13/04
Acting Town Manager	Town Web Site	Revised 2/2/04